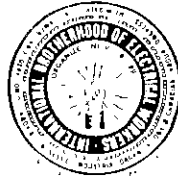


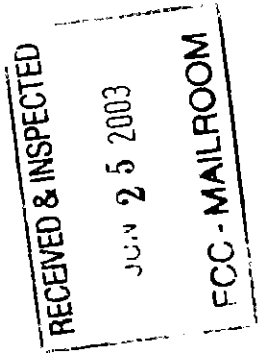
International
Electrical



LOCAL No 728

SUNSHINE PERIOD
Brotherhood
Markers

02-277



Confirmed

June 20, 2003

2003
Distribution Center

Federal Communications Commission
445 - 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

To Whom It May Concern

If ever it was time for Congress to leave behind partisanship, it is now, on the specific issue of the Federal Communications Commission's recent regulatory decisions, which will allow, even encourage, monopolistic control of our airways

Just three political appointees have made decisions that will have a profoundly negative effect on our Democracy. This relaxation of previous rules will undoubtedly have the effect of stifling freedom of speech.

I urge you to view their actions with great alarm, responding with immediate congressional action to reverse the Commission's new rules.

I would very much appreciate your views on this very important matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James A. Weldon".

James A. Weldon
Business Manager
IBEW Local Union 728

cc Mel Horton, IVP

A sure-fire recipe for trouble

Three anonymous political appointees to the Federal Communications Commission have just delivered a body blow to American democracy. Large media companies are to be allowed to buy up more TV stations and newspapers, becoming more powerful and reaping a financial bonanza. Astonishingly, the FCC has done this without public review, without analyzing its consequences, and without the American people getting a dime in return for their public airwaves. Under the FCC deal, big media companies must make no commitment to provide better news, or even unbiased news. Ditto with local news coverage and children's programming. In fact, the new rules dramatically worsen opportunities for local news coverage, for diversity of views, and for competition. "The public be damned!" was a robber baron's slogan from the Gilded Age. Seems to be just what the FCC is saying.

Consider the enormity of the changes. The commissioners removed the ban on broadcasting and newspaper cross-ownership. They raised the national cap on audience reach by station-group owners to 45 percent. They allowed ownership of two stations in more markets, and even three in a handful of markets. There's more, but you get the idea.

Monopolies. These FCC rules allow new merger possibilities without any public-interest review. The details are complicated, but basically, thanks to the FCC, one company now can own UHF TV stations in 199 of the nation's 210 TV markets, which is pretty much the equivalent of owning stations in every TV market in every state except California. That means a single company could influence the elections for 98 U.S. senators, 382 members of the House of Representatives, 49 governors, 49 state legislatures, and countless local races. Employing another strategy now allowed by the FCC, that same company could own VHF stations in every TV market in 38 states, with the power to influence elections in 76 U.S. senate races, 182 House races, 38 gubernatorial races, and 38 state legislatures, along with countless local races. There are other scenarios. But again, you get the idea.

Easing the rules on cross-ownership means that in many local markets one company could own its leading daily newspaper—and, often, its only newspaper—its top-rated TV station, the local cable company, and, as a bonus, five to eight radio stations. Previously, no TV and newspaper mergers were allowed in the same market, except when a firm was failing. Now the merger of the dominant newspaper

and TV station could create local news monopolies in 200 markets serving 98 percent of all Americans.

What's going on? Several years ago, the FCC allowed one company to own as many radio stations as it wanted. The unintended result is the monopolization of many local markets and three national companies owning half the stations in America, delivering a homogenized product that neglects local news coverage. Small to midsize firms know that major networks will gobble up affiliates, cut local programming costs, and program centrally from their own stations. Independents will be squeezed out. "For Sale" signs are already going up. More consolidation, more news sharing,

and fewer journalists add up to an enhanced danger of media corporations abusing market power to slant coverage in ways that fit their political and financial interests—and suppressing coverage that doesn't. One defense of this outrage that big media companies offer is the diversity of the Web. Well, yes. But does anyone really think the Internet is anything like an organized political or media power, much less a counterweight to a clique of billion-dollar media behemoths?

The good news is that the nation, finally, is waking up. The FCC has received hundreds of thousands of

protests. Congressmen, both Democrats and Republicans, are alarmed. So are groups as diverse as Common Cause, the National Rifle Association, and the Screen Actors Guild. One of our more thoughtful conservative columnists, William Safire of the *New York Times*, writes that "the concentration of power—political, corporate, media, cultural—should be anathema to conservatives." John Roberts in the *Chicago Tribune* deplores the "blatantly disingenuous, if not dishonest, explanations being given by FCC Chairman Michael Powell and his supporters for their actions."

No prizes for guessing who supports the commission: the major media conglomerates who have coincidentally spent more than \$80 million on lobbying, plus over \$25 million in political contributions, in the past three years and stand to gain enormously from this.


Regardless of their political ideology, we cannot risk non-elected media bosses having inappropriate local, regional, or national power. The FCC was created to ensure that the public interest is served by the media companies that use our airwaves. Everyone is entitled to a mistake sometime, but the FCC is abusing the privilege. Congress must act now and reverse the FCC's irresponsible new rules. ●

The FCC's recent decision to ease ownership rules on big media companies, if not reversed, will deliver a body blow to our democracy.

SUNSHINE PERIOD

02-277

I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY DISPLEASURE
OVER MR. POWELL'S RECENT CHANGING OF
MEDIA OWNERSHIP RULES. I FEEL
IT IS IN DIRECT OPPOSITION OF THE
CONSTITUTION WHEREBY IT STATES THE
CASE FOR MEDIA DIVERSITY. ALLOWING
OWNERSHIP PROVIDED BY THE RULING'S
CONDITIONS WILL SERIOUSLY UNDERMINE
AND RESTRICT DIVERSITY IN THE
MEDIA



FURTHERMORE WE SHOULD EVEN RESCIND
THE FIRST DEREGULATION GRANTED IN
THE 1996 TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT.



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JUN 26 2003
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JUN 25 2003
FCC - MAILROOM